EARTH OBSERVATION SUMMIT

World Officials Agree to Share Ecology Data

By ANDREW C. REVKIN
408 words
1 August 2003
The New York Times
Late Edition - Final
3
English
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WASHINGTON, July 31 -- Officials from more than 30 countries agreed today to expand monitoring of the atmosphere, the oceans and the land and to create a system for sharing the resulting data.

At a meeting here organized by the Bush administration, the officials said the goal of the 10-year effort was to fill in big gaps, primarily in developing countries, in the network of instruments recording earth's vital signs. The resulting benefits, like better crop and weather forecasts, are to be shared by rich and poor countries alike.

Such a system was made possible by the explosion of the Internet and advances in monitoring technology, participants said, and it was necessitated by climate shifts and stresses on agriculture, water supplies and ecosystems.

"Whether we're talking about geophysics or geopolitics, our 21st-century world is profoundly interconnected," said Secretary of State Colin L. Powell, one of four participating Bush cabinet secretaries.

"We all need a better understanding of the earth and its systems," he said. "Just think how a farmer in East Africa or a forest manager in the southwestern United States could benefit from access to improved forecasting of rains or drought conditions."

He and many other participants said an integrated "earth observation system" would reduce damage from storms, bolster food supplies, better protect threatened wild areas and provide a clearer view of the causes and risks of global warming.

Most of the participating countries, which ranged in size and power from Germany to Gabon, credited the Bush administration for pushing the project even though they differ with President Bush over global warming, the most contentious international environmental issue right now.

Mr. Bush has rejected the Kyoto Protocol, the first binding treaty that would limit heat-trapping greenhouse gases linked to rising temperatures, while most of the participating countries have already ratified it.

The meeting grew in part out of commitments by Mr. Bush and leaders of other big industrialized nations at a summit meeting in France in June to build an integrated global environmental monitoring system. But they have yet to commit the money that would be necessary.

At the meeting here, administration officials said Mr. Bush had committed $25 million as a matching contribution to help developing countries link up to the global network for

tracking what Donald L. Evans, the commerce secretary, called "the heartbeat of Mother Earth."

Earth in the Balance

By Vijay V. Vaitheeswaran
784 words
1 August 2003
The Wall Street Journal Europe
A10
English
(Copyright (c) 2003, Dow Jones & Company, Inc.)
"George W. Bush -- Polluter of the Free World" screamed a headline in the Independent of London two years ago, after Mr. Bush decided to take the U.S. out of the Kyoto treaty on climate change. Since then, greens everywhere have gleefully demonized him as the most unilateralist, anti-environmental president in ages. That caricature was never entirely fair -- and it certainly deserves to be re-examined now.

Yesterday, in Washington, Secretary of State Colin Powell and other members of the Bush cabinet hosted the first-ever ministerial conference devoted to the theme of "earth observation." In a nutshell, that means the creation of a sophisticated but benign Big Brother to watch over the earth and its precious ecosystems. Some 30 countries are expected to send high-level emissaries. This gathering -- and the 10-year process that it is designed to launch -- could prove to be the biggest gift that we can give to the planet and to ourselves.

Before we can decide the most sensible course of action to tackle climate change, water scarcity, species loss and myriad other environmental concerns, we need to know how bad the problems really are. We need reliable baseline data on the state of ecosystems today, and we need to understand how natural and human factors influence those ecosystems.

Yet, despite the diligent efforts of experts over the years, global environmental data remain pitiful. The richest countries in the world have pretty good measurements on local air and water quality, but that isn't true of the poor world or of trans-boundary problems. Even when there are good data sets in particular countries, the differing methodologies and technical systems used often make global comparisons tricky. And our ignorance of the true state of the world's seas is deeply distressing, especially since the little-understood interface between the oceans and the atmosphere could prove the key to figuring out how the climate system really works.

Even those skeptical of global warming should rally to this cause, for there are plenty of short-term benefits to be had from an integrated approach. El Nino has long wrought havoc along the Pacific coast of the Americas. Thanks to a complex system of satellites, ocean buoys, land-based observations and -- crucially -- the integration across national boundaries of all these things, scientists can now forecast its impacts with much greater accuracy. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the chief organizer of

this week's conference, estimates that California suffered $1.1 billion less damage than it otherwise might have when El Nino struck in 1997-98 thanks to this early warning system.

So why haven't we done more? A decade or two ago, the answer might have been the lack of technology. Now there is no shortage of sophisticated satellites, oceanic sensors, or supercomputers. Nor is funding the main issue. Just last week, the Bush administration announced over $100 million more for observation as part of its new climate science policy.

The real problem has been politics. Developing countries like Brazil never trusted the spy satellites of the rich world. They feared that the prying eyes in the sky would humiliate local governments by exposing the true state of their forests or, worse, would somehow help multinationals steal their natural resources. Europe has always been suspicious of the role played by America's military in running the country's satellite systems for civilian earth observation, communications and global positioning. In turn, the U.S. has tried to bully Europe into abandoning or at least modifying its ambitious Galileo satellite system.

The upshot of all this is that petty politics has kept countries from working together properly. And suspicions remain: cynics argue that Mr. Bush is now keen on earth observation only because focusing on scientific uncertainties helps his political strategy of doing nothing serious about global warming.

They all miss the point: Mr. Bush is about to pull off something that neither the greener-than-thou Al Gore nor the many self-righteously ecological governments in Europe ever had the muscle or foresight to do: forge the political consensus needed to create an integrated global system of earth observation for the first time. It will not happen overnight, but in time the very green, very multilateral process set in motion this week will help everyone -- eco-skeptics and radical environmentalists alike -- understand the true state of our planet. Surely that deserves the whole-hearted support of everyone who cares about the environment.

Mr. Vaitheeswaran is the environment and energy correspondent of The Economist and the author of "Power to the People," to be published in November by Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Minister pleased U.S. addressing climate change

PAUL KORING
Staff Writer
367 words
1 August 2003
The Globe and Mail
National
A12
English
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Washington DC
Canadian Environment Minister David Anderson said he was “pleasantly surprised” yesterday that the White House addressed climate change and voiced a “willingness to work with the rest of the world.”
At the opening of a conference aimed at fostering international co-operation to tackle climate and health problems, Mr. Anderson said he hoped Washington's new interest in climate change would presage “a greater willingness to reduce emissions,” which many scientists believe contribute to global warning.
“I see this summit as an opportunity to bring political willpower to bear on what has been to date, [for] the most part, a technical discussion,” Mr. Anderson said.
Although U.S. President George W. Bush has rejected the Kyoto pact, which requires significant emissions cuts, a U.S. call for international efforts to share ocean and climatological data has been widely welcomed by environmentalists.
“We are all here because we share a deep interest in increasing human knowledge about our planet,” said U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, who opened the two-day conference attended by representatives of more than 30 countries. “Think of . . . the lives that could be saved and the misery avoided if disaster managers in earthquake-, flood- or hurricane-prone regions could have many days, or even weeks, of advance warning. Or if we could better predict malarial outbreaks and other sources of infectious-disease outbreaks that threaten the well-being of citizens around the world,” he said.
“President Bush knows that these complex interdependencies hold far-reaching implications for well-being here at home and in the world at large.”
Washington is proposing an international exchange of data collected by satellites as a first step in broadening knowledge about ocean levels, temperatures and climate change.
“There are still many unanswered questions about the ecosystem-based processes that define our world,” U.S. Commerce Secretary Don Evans said. “A comprehensive Earth Observation System can bring some of these truths to light”.

Mr. Anderson said all Environment Canada climate records, some dating back 160 years, would be made available on-line. In his opening statement, he urged particular focus on the Arctic.
A Section

Group to Plan Global Sharing of Environmental Data

Guy Gugliotta
Washington Post Staff Writer
356 words
1 August 2003
The Washington Post
FINAL
A07
English
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Nearly five dozen nations and international organizations agreed yesterday to develop a plan to share world environmental data and create methods for continuous monitoring of Earth systems ranging from weather and sea temperatures to atmospheric quality and ultraviolet light.
Participants at the Earth Observation Summit, hosted by the State Department, formed an ad hoc group to design a plan for nations and organizations to pool their monitoring data into an integrated worldwide framework.
"It's a first step toward solving a large political problem," said Conrad C. Lautenbacher, administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. "This aims to build a system in which nations agree to exchange data on a free and open basis."
The ministerial-level meeting, attended by Secretary of State Colin L. Powell and Secretary of Commerce Donald L. Evans, issued a declaration describing the development of an "implementation plan" by the end of 2004 for nations and organizations to integrate their global monitoring systems.
Such integration would give free access to global data collected not only by satellites, but also on the ground and beneath the sea. The data would measure a variety of phenomena vital to decision makers as diverse as carmakers interested in emission controls and farmers worried about the chance of rain. "Scientists estimate 30 percent of [world gross domestic product] is affected by knowledge of what's going on in the environment," Lautenbacher said.
"We also need to collect the kinds of data necessary to answer hard questions about environmental management, resource management, climate change and climate forecasts," he added. "It will also help us address medical, public health and agriculture issues on a global basis."
Jeffrey D. Sachs, director of Columbia University's Earth Institute and a frequent critic of the Bush administration, endorsed the plan as "serious and important," saying that "these systems are the kind of thing that helped save us from ozone depletion -- what

they have rightly figured out is that you need a lot of cooperation in different places in the world."
http://www.washingtonpost.com

34 Ministers Agree to Create New Global Observation System.

170 words
31 July 2003
22:03
Jiji Press English News Service
English
(c) 2003
Washington, July 31 (Jiji Press) - Ministers from 34 countries Thursday adopted a joint statement calling for the establishment of a global environment observation system to better deal with climate changes and natural disasters through international observation data sharing.
At the Earth Observation Summit held here, ministers also agreed to set up a study group comprising environment experts. Kisaburo Tokai, senior vice minister for science and technology, attended the summit to represent Japan.
The group of experts aims to work out a 10-year implementation plan by the time when the next ministerial meeting will take place in Tokyo in the spring of 2004.
The first gathering of the group is scheduled for Friday and Saturday. The participants will determine what to observe and ways for data sharing by developed and developing nations alike.
The joint statement came after the Group of Eight major nations agreed, in their summit held in Evian, France, in June, to strengthen international cooperation on global observation.

Earth observation ministerial meet set for 2004 in Tokyo.

195 words
31 July 2003
23:08
Kyodo News
English
(c) 2003 Kyodo News
Senior officials from 35 countries, including Japan, the United States and European nations, agreed Thursday to hold a ministerial meeting in Tokyo next year on observing and monitoring the Earth.
The accord was reached at the "Earth Observation Summit" held in Washington to promote international cooperation and coordination among global observing systems, such as satellite networks, to help predict natural disasters and assess the state of environmental degradation.

The participants agreed to work out the framework of a 10-year plan for the integration of global observing systems by the time of the proposed Tokyo meeting with the hope of adopting it by the end of next year, according to a declaration issued at the meeting.
The declaration also called for strengthening cooperation in global observations, promoting the exchange of observation data and boosting assistance to developing countries for their improvement of observation systems.
The U.S. had proposed the meeting, which was attended by Secretary of State Colin Powell, Commerce Secretary Don Evans and Interior Secretary Gale Norton.
Kisaburo Tokai, senior vice minister for education, culture, sports, science and technology, represented Japan at the meeting.

Bush administration seems more interested in climate change, Anderson says

BY BETH GORHAM
CP
528 words
31 July 2003
14:38
The Canadian Press
English
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WASHINGTON (CP) _ A U.S.-led global initiative to collect data about the Earth suggests American officials are becoming more serious about climate change, Environment Minister David Anderson said Thursday.
Representatives from 30 nations met in the U.S. capital to discuss a worldwide Earth observation data bank to provide a vast scientific picture of the planet and how it's changing.
Anderson, who announced Canada is sharing its climate archive dating back to 1840, said high-ranking officials, including Secretary of State Colin Powell, are talking about global warming.
``I was very encouraged, as a person who believes that the United States in fact made a mistake in not continuing with the Kyoto process," said the minister.
``I was very pleased to see that the interest in climate change is apparently increasing in the administration at the highest level."
Under the Kyoto climate accord, Canada has committed to a six per cent reduction in 1990 levels of greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming by 2012.
It has been ratified by 111 countries representing 44.2 per cent of global greenhouse emissions. But the United States, worried about the costs to industries reducing their emissions, hasn't signed on.
References to climate change have been taken out of Environmental Protection Agency reports.

And while the Bush administration recently announced a 10-year, $103-million plan to speed research on the subject, environmentalists say there's been more than enough study and it's clearly time to cut emissions.
The U.S. Senate is considering legislation this week that would control carbon dioxide _ the main greenhouse gas _ but many do not expect it to pass.
The global database would take information provided by farmers, satellites, weather balloons and other sources from around the world and merge it for the first time. The plan would include helping poor countries develop monitoring systems.
More accurate weather forecasts could be one of the big results.
``Our co-operation will enable us to develop the capability to predict droughts, prepare for weather emergencies, plan and protect crops, manage coastal areas and fisheries and monitor air quality,'' President George W. Bush said in a statement.
Powell, in his address to the conference, said there could be many health benefits and lives saved with days or even weeks of warning before earthquakes, floods and hurricanes.
Commerce Secretary Don Evans noted that a comprehensive observation system would help scientists gain a more complete understanding of climate change and ecosystem processes that define the world.
Anderson, who says Canada is contributing some 200 million observations, told the gathering there are still ``significant deficiencies in observing systems for weather, climate and water, which leave many parts of the globe with inadequate coverage.''
He pointed in particular to the need for more measurements in the Arctic, where sea ice has been declining, and the oceans.
``I see this summit as an opportunity to bring political horsepower to bear on what has been to date, on the most part, a technical discussion.''
Canada spends about $80 million a year collecting this kind of physical information.

Nations gather in Washington to seek better Earth observing system.

381 words
31 July 2003
Xinhua News Agency
English
(c) Copyright 2003 Xinhua News Agency
WASHINGTON, July 31 (Xinhua) - Representatives from more than 30 countries gathered here Thursday to discuss plans for building an international Earth observation system that is aimed at providing critical data about the planet's climate change and weather patterns.
The Earth Observation Summit, hosted by the United States, adopted a declaration calling for a commitment to develop a comprehensive, coordinated Earth observation system and to establish a working group to prepare a 10-year implementation plan.

"An integrated Earth observation system will benefit people around the world, particularly those in the Southern Hemisphere," US President George W. Bush said in a statement.
"Our cooperation will enable us to develop the capability to predict droughts, prepare for weather emergencies, plan and protect crops, manage coastal areas and fisheries, and monitor air quality." Bush said.
Figures released by US government agencies showed that more than 3 trillion dollars of the US economy is affected by climate and weather, including the agriculture, energy, construction, travel and transportation industry sectors.
There are powerful economic as well as environmental incentives for gaining a greater understanding of the planet's weather and climate change. It is estimated that better forecasting of El Nino weather El Nino are already saving farmers at least 450 million to 550 million US dollars a year worldwide.
Governments and international organizations have already made significant investments in developing various Earth monitoring systems, but according to US Commerce Secretary Don Evans, " crucial data gaps remain."
"The world's oceans cover 70 percent of the planet and drive climate trends that affect every nation of the globe, yet they are sparsely monitored and poorly understood," said Evans. "The Earth Observation Summit creates an international coalition to address emerging global issues and lays the groundwork for improved environmental decision-making and economic growth and prosperity."
However, environmental groups criticized that the push by the Bush administration for more research on climate change may be a deliberate attempt to divert attention from the fact that the US is one of the few industrial nations that has not agreed to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other man-made pollutants that are thought to be warming the atmosphere, The Wall Street Journal said in an earlier report.

Canada warms to eye in sky

CanWest News Service; CP
107 words
31 July 2003
Montreal Gazette
Final
A13
English
Copyright © 2003 Montreal Gazette
OTTAWA
Bitter arguments about climate change could finally be settled with the creation of a global Earth-observation system proposed by Washington with Canada's support. The system would merge data from satellites, ocean buoys, weather balloons and other sources to provide, for the first time, a coherent scientific picture of the planet.

Representatives of 27 nations will meet today in Washington to discuss what could be the biggest international science effort since the Space Station. "I think it's very likely Canada will participate," said Environment Minister David Anderson, who will represent Canada.

Statement comes as international summit convenes in Washington -

239 words
31 July 2003
State Department Press Releases And Documents
English
Copyright (c) 2003 Federal Information & News Dispatch, Inc.
President Bush issued a statement July 31 hailing the opening of the Earth Observation Summit in Washington. Representatives from more than 30 nations are on hand to discuss a plan for development of an improved global data-gathering and sharing system.
Following is the statement from the White House:
THE WHITE HOUSE, Office of the Press Secretary, July 31, 2003
STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT
The United States is pleased to host more than 30 nations at the Earth Observation Summit.
The Summit participants will discuss plans for achieving the goal of building a better integrated earth observation system in the next 10 years, an objective established by the G-8 Heads of State in Evian, France, in June 2003. An integrated earth observation system will benefit people around the world, particularly those in the Southern Hemisphere. Working together, our nations will develop and link observation technologies for tracking weather and climate changes in every corner of the world, which will allow us to make more informed decisions affecting our environment and economies. Our cooperation will enable us to develop the capability to predict droughts, prepare for weather emergencies, plan and protect crops, manage coastal areas and fisheries, and monitor air quality.
(end text)
(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: usinfo.state.gov)

Calls for assisting developing nations to access observation data -

566 words
31 July 2003
State Department Press Releases And Documents
English
Copyright (c) 2003 Federal Information & News Dispatch, Inc.

Representatives from over 30 countries attending the Earth Observation Summit have called for a coordinated effort to assist developing countries improve their contributions as well as their access to global observing systems.

In a declaration released July 31, the ministers also called for preparation of a 10-year implementation plan for an Earth observing system, which would bring together national and multinational surface, airborne and space-based measurements of the Earth in a coordinated network. The declaration says the implementation plan should be ready in time for the Tokyo ministerial conference on Earth observations to be held during the second quarter of 2004.

Following is the text of the Earth Observation Summit declaration:

DECLARATION OF THE EARTH OBSERVATION SUMMIT

We, the participants in the Earth Observation Summit held in Washington, DC, on July 31, 2003:

Recalling the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg that called for strengthened cooperation and coordination among global observing systems and research programs for integrated global observations;

Recalling also the outcome of the G-8 Summit held in Evian that called for strengthened international cooperation on global observation of the environment;

Noting the vital importance of the mission of organizations engaged in Earth observation activities and their contribution to national, regional and global needs;

Affirm the need for timely, quality, long-term, global information as a basis for sound decision making. In order to monitor continuously the state of the Earth, to increase understanding of dynamic Earth processes, to enhance prediction of the Earth system, and to further implement our environmental treaty obligations, we recognize the need to support:

(1) Improved coordination of strategies and systems for observations of the Earth and identification of measures to minimize data gaps, with a view to moving toward a comprehensive, coordinated, and sustained Earth observation system or systems;

(2) A coordinated effort to involve and assist developing countries in improving and sustaining their contributions to observing systems, as well as their access to and effective utilization of observations, data and products, and the related technologies by addressing capacity-building needs related to Earth observations;

(3) The exchange of observations recorded from in situ, aircraft, and satellite networks, dedicated to the purposes of this Declaration, in a full and open manner with minimum time delay and minimum cost, recognizing relevant international instruments and national policies and legislation; and

(4) Preparation of a 10-year Implementation Plan, building on existing systems and initiatives, with the Framework being available by the Tokyo ministerial conference on Earth observations to be held during the second quarter of 2004, and the Plan being available by the ministerial conference to be hosted by the European Union during the fourth quarter of 2004.

To effect these objectives, we establish an ad hoc Group on Earth Observations and commission the group to proceed, taking into account the existing activities aimed at

developing a global observing strategy in addressing the above. We invite other governments to join us in this initiative. We also invite the government bodies of international and regional organizations sponsoring existing Earth observing systems to endorse and support our action, and to facilitate participation of their experts in implementing this Declaration.
(end text)
(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: usinfo.state.gov)
Office of State Department Public Communication Division, 202-647-6575

Nations seek to integrate climate change tracking mechanisms.

by Matthew Lee
616 words
31 July 2003
Agence France Presse
English
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ATTENTION - ADDS details///
Government officials and scientists from more that 30 countries called Thursday for the speedy development of an integrated method to observe climate change and other environmental trends on Earth.
Participants at the so-called "Earth Observation Summit," held at the US State Department, pledged to move ahead with an "international, comprehensive, coordinated and sustained" monitoring mechanism within 10 years time.
"We, the participants, call for and intend to participate in a comprehensive, coordinated Earth observation system that is used for the benefit of humankind and thereby contributes to sustaining the Earth for future generations," they said in a declaration after the meeting.
The aim is to link the thousands of individual land-, sea-and space-based climate observation assets to better predict environmental changes and natural disasters and limit their impact, they said.
A conceptual framework for linking those assets is expected to be developed by the spring of 2004 when a ministerial level meeting on the project will be held in Tokyo which will then lead to the actual creation of the new system.
Such a system would greatly improve weather forecasting, particularly with major trends such as El Nino, crop yield estimates, the monitoring of water and air quality, boost airline safety and promote climate-related health research, they said.

"Our cooperation will enable us to develop the capability to predict droughts, prepare for weather emergencies, plan and protect crops, manage coastal areas and fisheries, and monitor air quality," US President George W. Bush said in a statement.
The leaders of the Group of Eight industrialized nations called for the initiative at their last summit in Evian, France last month with an eye toward helping mainly developing countries in the southern hemisphere.
But, as US officials noted, an integrated global climate monitoring system would help the entire population of earth, noting the worldwide benefit of El Nino forecasting are estimated at between 450 to 550 million dollars per year.
For every dollar invested in improving weather forecasting, farmers reap 15 dollars in benefits, they said.
The annual cost of electricity could decrease by at least one billion dollars if those forecasts could be improved by just one degree, they said.
And, the airline industry, which now loses about four billion dollars a year because of weather-related delays and cancellations, could cut those losses by as much as 1.7 billion dollars through better forecasting and observation.
"The benefits of an Earth Observation system ... are vitally important to the United States and to the people of the world," said US Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham as he opened the conference.
"A more systematic, open, and timely sharing of existing earth observations information would greatly improve responses to natural hazards or disasters," Secretary of State Colin Powell told the conference.
The one-day summit will be followed by a two-day working session at which delegates are to lay the groundwork for the "conceptual framework" for an integrated earth observation system.
Part of that framework is expected to focus on integrating data from weather satellites and other space-based tracking systems but organizers said they were equally concerned about sea-based assets.
Currently, a number of countries are cooperating in the so-called ARGO system which has deployed nearly 825 ocean monitoring buoys which drop below the sea surface to collect and record data and then transmit them to satellites.
However, organizers said ARGO needed to be vastly expanded to include at least 3,000 buoys.
The framework is also expected to call for massive international investment in super-computing simulation to accurately predict environmental and weather changes.
mvl/aln
AFP.

EARTH OBSERVATION SUMMIT

Earth Conference Kicks Off in D.C.

By BARRY SCHWEID
AP Diplomatic Writer
532 words
31 July 2003
AP Online
English
Copyright 2003 The Associated Press. All Rights Reserved.
WASHINGTON (AP) - The Bush administration kicked off an international conference Thursday aimed at learning more about the Earth and using the information to cope with weather and health problems.

"(The) potential for international collaboration in addressing these challenges is great, and the time to do it is now," Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham told officials, scientists and bankers from more than 30 nations who gathered at the State Department for the daylong conference.

Abraham, Secretary of State Colin Powell and Commerce Secretary Don Evans said they hope the session would encourage a strong partnership between science and government to meet critical challenges in disease and to protect the environment.

"We are all here because we share a deep interest in increasing human knowledge about our planet, and we want to act on that knowledge," Powell said. "Think of ... the lives that could be saved and the misery avoided if disaster managers in earthquake, flood or hurricane-prone regions could have many days or even weeks of advance warning. Or if we could better predict malarial outbreaks and other sources of infectious disease outbreaks that threatens the world being of citizens around the world."

In a statement, President Bush said an integrated earth observation system will benefit people around the world, "particularly those in the Southern Hemisphere."

"Our cooperation will enable us to develop the capability to predict droughts, prepare for weather emergencies, plan and protect crops, manage coastal areas and fisheries, and monitor air quality," Bush said.

As a first step, Powell suggested creating an international system to make use of space-based measurements of the Earth. But Conrad C. Lauterbacher Jr., administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration, said one problem was the countries have different systems of collecting data.

Evans said development of an observation system for the planet could help scientists gain a more complete understanding of climate change and "the heartbeat of Mother Earth."

"There are still many unanswered questions abut the ecosystem-based processes that define our world," Evans said. "A comprehensive Earth Observation System can bring some of these truths to light."

Last week, the Bush administration announced a 10-year, $103 million plan to speed research in climate change, measure climatic effects from burning fossil fuel and industrial production of warming gases.

But environmentalists said the administration was focusing too much on natural causes and reopening scientific issues already studied thoroughly.
The $103 million will be diverted from other programs, and no new spending has been announced to promote earth observation, either.
The Bush administration has been lukewarm to some international accords - spurning, for instance, a treaty to reduce global warming on grounds the economic consequences would be severe.
But Powell, who drew chuckles in saying the world of science was relieved he chose the military instead of a career in geology - he earned a bachelor of science degree in geology from City College in New York - said it is important for science and technology to reinforce the decisions of politicians and business executives.
"Developmental challenges are much too big for governments to tackle alone," Powell said.
AP-Earth-Observation-Summit; D7SKLSR00

Scientists, bankers, government officials gather to learn more about the Earth

By BARRY SCHWEID
AP Diplomatic Writer
534 words
31 July 2003
11:27
Associated Press Newswires
English
Copyright 2003. The Associated Press. All Rights Reserved.
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Canada supports creation of Earth-observation system

Canadian Press
128 words
31 July 2003
Kitchener-Waterloo Record
Final
A6
English
Copyright (c) 2003 Kitchener-Waterloo Record.
OTTAWA
Bitter arguments about climate change could finally be settled with the creation of a global Earth-observation system proposed by Washington with Canada's support.
The system would merge data from satellites, ocean buoys, weather balloons and other sources to provide, for the first time, a coherent scientific picture of the planet.
Representatives of 27 nations will meet today in Washington to discuss what could be the biggest international science effort since the decision to build Space Station Freedom.
"I think it's very likely Canada will participate," said Environment Minister David Anderson.
Predicted benefits include more accurate weather forecasting and definitive answers on questions such as whether sea levels are rising due to climate change.

Q&A: The Earth Observation Summit

954 words
31 July 2003
Christian Science Monitor
ALL
25
English
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Peter Spotts reports on science and technology for The Christian Science Monitor. He writes news and feature articles on scientific developments across a wide range of fields, as well as on science policy. Mr. Spotts discussed the coming summit with csmonitor.com's Tim Rauschenberger.
Why now? Why hasn't such a concerted effort to share environmental data been made for almost 50 years?

The short answer is the lack of political will. Also, a desire to keep the information close to the vest for national security reasons. Remember, the cold war ended only about a decade ago. All during that period, the US Navy was gathering all sorts of useful oceanographic information so it could more effectively counter Soviet submarines. But much of that information was classified, and only came to light after the break-up of the former Soviet Union. And the idea that pollution knows no boundaries -- while a no-brainer to specialists in the field -- caught on relatively slowly in the political arena. The global reach of radioactivity from the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in the mid-1980s helped drive the lesson home in a major way. And it's only within the past decade or two that instruments and computing horsepower have advanced to a point where a truly global network was possible.

What are some examples of applications for the environmental data that the sensors will gather?

Scientifically, we still know very little about some 70 percent of the planet's surface -- the oceans. So this is expected to be a major thrust of any global observing network. Measurements of conditions in the North Pacific, for example, can improve weather forecasts for the US West Coast. They also can yield insights into atmospheric and ocean circulation patterns that can affect climate. Biological sensors on buoys or on underwater vehicles could yield insights into how plankton takes up nutrients and carbon dioxide, which also bear on climate-change issues.

And, of course, satellite information already is being used to track the response of terrestrial plants to changing climate, aid in battling forest fires, and even in search-and-rescue efforts.

The Earth Observation Summit (EOS) is being held at the US State Department. Is the US government leading this endeavor, or are they on an equal footing with other participants? How much influence will other G-8 countries have?

The US is hosting the Earth Observation Summit. But it is at the behest of the G-8. The question of "footing" is probably one that will be worked out. While countries such as Britain, Japan, and Germany have very active research groups working on issues such as climate, the US is the world leader in gathering environmental data in the field. And many of the satellites the US launches are the result of collaborations between US and overseas researchers.

After Thursday's session, technical experts will continue to work on this through December, when they will present a draft plan for the proposed sensor network. The final plan is due at the G-8 meeting next spring. But it seems clear that for this to be a truly international effort, the data must be available to everyone. In addition, there should be some way for less-developed countries to make use of the information.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development was organized by a United Nations commission. Is there a reason the UN is not the organizing body of the EOS?

Sure. First, this is a G-8 initiative, although it also is the G- 8's response to a need identified at the UN Johannesburg summit. Sustainable development not only requires specific techniques, but a means of assessing the effect those techniques have on the ecosystems people want to protect. And as new ideas for sustainable development

come along, the data from an Earth-observation network will measure progress, yield new insights into how those ecosystems work, and allow -- through the use of modeling -- some means of "testing" fresh ideas for sustainable-development approaches before they are implemented.
Second (and this is speculation), environmental groups and many of this country's traditional allies have watched in dismay as the Bush administration pulled out of the Kyoto Protocol on climate change. The White House also is taking what some see as a much more pro-business approach to a range of environmental and energy issues at home.
With this project, it's hard not to be on the side of the angels. Scientists have been interested in doing this for nearly 30 years. Potential commercial users are interested, and even environmental groups say this kind of effort is long overdue. So taking the lead on this could be seen as a way for the White House to earn some brownie points on the environment at a time when so many of its other initiatives are under attack.
If the Earth Observation Summit is a success, what can we expect in the future?
That we won't know until after we get there. Proponents say it could lay the groundwork for a new suite of tools to forecast a range of environmental conditions whose changes can have a major effect on economic development. It could provide scientists building those forecasting tools with the kind of consistent, long-term, high- quality data that gives them greater confidence in the trends and fresh discoveries the data yield. Those in turn get fed back into forecast models to improve their accuracy. In short, the network would become the most powerful tool yet for understanding and managing humanity's pervasive influence on Earth and its ecosystems.(c) Copyright 2003. The Christian Science Monitor

Cooperation: Earth ; Thursday, world ministers meet in Washington in a historic effort to coordinate data from satellites to deep-sea floats to forecast the planet's environmental changes.

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WASHINGTON
Like restaurateurs watching food-laden plates move from the kitchen to customers, scientists with the US Geological Survey have been watching - and measuring - nitrogen and phosphates pouring down the Mississippi and Atchafalaya rivers into the Gulf of Mexico.

While algae in the Gulf have been munching on these nutrients, a team of scientists has fed their measurements into computers and announced last Friday the first annual forecast for the Gulf's "dead zone" - a vast region of ocean deprived of dissolved oxygen as the area's algae population explodes, dies, and then decays.

For top federal officials here, the effort is a small-scale example of what they hope will grow into a coordinated, long-term international effort to monitor the environment planet-wide.

Thursday, ministers from 34 nations and several nongovernmental organizations are meeting at the State Department to lay the political foundation for pulling together disparate systems of sensors - from "floats" gathering data deep below the sea surface to satellites in Earth's orbit. The idea is to create a more tightly linked set of tools for tracking and forecasting environmental changes that can affect fisheries, agriculture, water resources, and climate.

If successful, the effort would be historic. Not since scientists around the world marshaled their efforts for a coordinated study of the planet during the International Geophysical Year, which began in July 1957 and involved 67 countries, has the global community put such a plan on the table.

But while a 21st-century global network will pay scientific dividends, "this is not a scientific hobbyhorse," says Vice Adm. Conrad Lautenbacher Jr. (ret.), who heads the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and is the lead US representative to today's Earth Observation Summit. Any network, he says, must be able to support efforts to provide useful forecasts - from the effects of solar storms on communications and climate to the emergence of harmful algae blooms along coasts to crucial shifts in the salinity of water in seaports, which effects the buoyancy of cargo ships.

The summit comes a week after the Bush administration unveiled its blueprint for reorganizing and setting priorities for federal climate-change research. It listed efforts to establish an international Earth-observation network as one of those initiatives.

Yet Admiral Lautenbacher points out that the concept of a global environmental observation network has a long pedigree, and it covers far more than elevation alone. For the past 20 to 30 years, he says, various scientific organizations have been interested in establishing what he terms "a Hubble Space Telescope for the Earth." Meanwhile, population growth, economic development, and the degradation they can bring to ecosystems have prompted increased interest in using an Earth-observation system to help manage the planet's resources.

Finally, watershed events like last year's summit on sustainable development in Johannesburg and the growing recognition that environmental problems are no respecters of international boundaries have helped pave the way politically.

"The confluence of these things makes this an interesting period, and a time when we're ready" for a truly international environmental monitoring effort, Lautenbacher says.

From the standpoint of sensors, US officials say, a broad range of useful measuring systems already are in place. For example, through NASA's Mission to Planet Earth program, the US has spent $7 billion on 18 satellites currently in orbit. These measure

changes in sea levels, monitor ocean biological activity, track changes in glaciers, and gather data on other key features of the planet.

Yet other systems of sensors, ranging from tide gauges for measuring sea level in developing countries to weather stations in some of the former Soviet republics, are falling into disrepair.

Elsewhere, technological advances such as GPS- capable sensors on weather balloons, increasingly used in developed countries, are beyond the financial reach of some developing nations who contribute data twice a day for use by weather forecasters worldwide.

One of the challenges, analysts say, will be devising a way to help participants gather and interpret information using the latest available technology and at a level of precision that will be useful to science as well as commerce.

"The basic thrust of the meeting seems to be that observations are good, yet bad observations are not good and can mislead" researchers and other people interested in using the information, notes Kevin Trenberth, who heads the climate-modeling section at the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colo. "With climate, for example, you're looking for very small changes over long periods of time."

He also warns that data gathered from a global network "should be freely and openly available to everyone." To do otherwise, he says, would leave the impression that the industrial countries, and particularly the US, are enlisting the aid of nations worldwide to develop information that would be usable only in nations that have the money, talent, and equipment to capture, archive, and analyze the vast volumes of information that a global network would generate.

For example, the data management system for NASA's Mission to Planet Earth alone carried a $1 billion price tag, says Ghassem Asrar, associate administrator for NASA's office of earth science.

And even the raw data have economic value, adds Brig. Gen. Jack Kelly (ret.), director of the National Weather Service. Satellite photos of croplands can have a direct bearing on the futures markets worldwide. "So as you build a network, how do you integrate the needs of the private sector" with those of noncommercial users? he asks.

Yet, General Kelly continues, the challenges are hardly insurmountable. "At the height of the cold war, when we were kids learning to duck underneath a desk, the US, Russia, and communist China agreed on very little. But we were able agree that we would routinely and reliably exchange weather information. It took political will, but we created the standards and telecommunications networks to rapidly and reliably share" the data, he says.

The proposal for a global Earth-observation network "is on a bigger scale and covers more elements of the ocean, land, and atmosphere. But it's doable now," he adds. "The only thing that has been lacking is political will."

He and other proponents say they hope Thursday's meeting will bridge that gap.(c) Copyright 2003. The Christian Science Monitor

EARTH OBSERVATION SUMMIT

SECRETARY POWELL DELIVERS REMARKS AT EARTH OBSERVATION SUMMIT SPEAKERS: COLIN L. POWELL

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U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE
SPENCER ABRAHAM U.S. SECRETARY OF ENERGY
DON EVANS U.S. SECRETARY OF COMMERCE

(UNKNOWN): Good morning, and welcome to each and every one of you, our delegates from the nations of the world and representatives from our international organizations. It's indeed a great honor and a pleasure to be at the podium today to open this historic occasion and to welcome each one of you on behalf of our co-hosts, the secretary of state, the secretary of commerce, and the secretary of energy of the United States of America.

And also, in addition to welcoming each of you this very important occasion where we have an opportunity to work together to benefit the peoples of the world, I'm most delighted and thrilled to be able to introduce our first speaker and the senior co-host of today's event.

A professional soldier and a professional diplomat and a public servant for many, many years, well-known to all of you in this room, I believe, who's been dedicated to not only working for the good of the United States but for the good of the world in many different areas of disciplines and interests that all of you share and we all share today. And also, a former boss of mine and just a great individual all around. It's my pleasure to introduce the secretary of state of the United States of America, Colin Powell.

(APPLAUSE)

POWELL: Well, thank you very much, Admiral, out in back there, Connie(ph), it's a great pleasure to be here and especially to be introduced by Connie(ph), somebody that I've worked with very closely in my days as a soldier. Connie(ph) was an important member of my staff when I was chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, we went through some challenging times together and many of you will remember the Gulf War and he was on my staff at that time.

And I'm so pleased to see him still in government and in this important position that he now holds. And I'm very pleased to co-host this event with Spence Abraham and Don Evans and my other colleagues who are here at the table.

And especially to welcome all of you to the Department of State. It is unique that you would get three American Cabinet officers hosting an event like this, but it is that important to us and for us. And the leadership of my two colleagues, Spence and Don,

have been instrumental in advancing President Bush's forward-looking climate research and energy strategy.
And it is a special pleasure to greet and welcome so many distinguished guests who have gathered for this conference. All one has to do is look around the room to see the importance that you all have attached to this gathering. I'm very pleased that so many ministers, heads of international organizations, heads of development banks and other funding agencies and leading scientists from around the world have assembled for this conference.
And we are all here because we share a deep interest in increasing human knowledge about our planet and we want to act on that knowledge to address the compelling environmental and development concerns we face together. The future of countries -- large and small, developed and developing -- depends upon the global ecosystem that embraces and sustains us all. Whether we are talking about geophysics or geopolitics, our 21st century world is profoundly interconnected.
President Bush knows that these complex interdependencies hold far-reaching implications for well-being here at home and in the world at large. In such a world, the strong partnership between science and statecraft is critical to meeting a range of global challenges from sustainable development to preventing the spread of infectious disease and to protecting the environment.
POWELL: I cannot claim any extraordinary powers of foresight, only happy coincidence, when I say that the interrelationships we increasingly find between science and state craft, between geophysics and geopolitics, validate my very untraditional career path that bring me here today.
Last year, I amused and probably alarmed and shocked our good neighbors across the street at the National Academy of Sciences by revealing that I am a scientist. I have a Bachelor of Science degree in geology from the City College of New York, and my great contribution to the field of geology is that I never entered it upon graduation.
(LAUGHTER)
The City College of New York gratefully saw me leave the doors with not only a Bachelor of Science in geology, but, thank heavens, also a commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in the United States Army. And they were pleased it was that career I followed and not geology.
But as one final tilt to all the education I received at CCNY in the field of geology, I became an infantry officer and acquainted myself with various rock formations -- dirt, jungles, deserts
(LAUGHTER)
and rivers around the world pursuing the national security of my nation. Luckily for everyone, I did go straight into the Army. But you know, you don't need to have a geology degree or to be secretary of state to survey the contours of our 21st-century world and see that science and technology must inform and increasingly inform and support good decision making by political leaders, corporate executives, and civic-minded nations and citizens.

We all need a better understanding of the earth and its systems. Such an understanding must begin with earth observations. With the development of ground-based and satellite-based systems that can document environmental changes in our land, rivers, forests, atmosphere and climate. We need to be able to see, hear, taste, smell and measure the blue orb we have been given and that we call earth. Already we reap daily benefits from earth observations in weather predictions, improved agricultural production and natural disaster management.

But much more can be done and much more must be done. Earth observations can better the lives of ordinary people in every land. Just think how a farmer in East Africa or a forest manager in the southwestern United States could benefit from access to improved forecasting of rains or drought conditions.

POWELL: The world meteorological organization estimates that farmers get $15 of value out of every dollar spent on forecasting the weather, a 15-to-1 cost-benefit ratio. Think also of the misery and the lives that could be saved and the misery avoided if disaster managers in earthquake-, flood- or hurricane-prone regions could have many days or even weeks of advance warning. Or if we could better predict malarial outbreaks and other sources of infectious disease outbreaks that threatens the world being of citizens around the world.

A more systematic, open, and timely sharing of existing earth observations information would greatly improve responses to natural hazards or disasters. We would gain even more dramatic benefits if we put in place a comprehensive earth observation system that will give us a complete picture of what is happening on our planet.

Consider the impact a coordinated earth observation system could have in just one crucial sphere alone -- development. In this area alone, development, statecraft and science can combine to unlock enormous human potential and help millions of people lift themselves out of poverty onto a path to prosperity.

Over the past several years, the international community has built a new consensus on how best to approach the challenge of development. Last September at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, governmental and non-governmental representatives all agreed that wise economic management, investment in people and care for the environment are inextricably linked. They are essential elements for successful development.

The summit participants recognized that sound science must underpin decision making in each of these key areas. They also recognized that developmental challenges are much too big for governments to tackle alone. Strong public, private partnerships are essential. They are vitally needed. The Congo Basin Forest Development Initiative launched by the United States in South Africa last year is just such a public, private partnership. So too, is the White Water to Blue Water Partnership, which promotes integrated watershed and marine management and includes the establishment of an oceans observation system for the Caribbean region.

POWELL: The Geographic Information For Sustainable Development Initiative is another example of an innovative private-public partnership. This initiative makes satellite imagery available via the Internet to people around the world. Just imagine the

power of that system so that anybody with access to this marvelous Internet can get information that just a few years ago would only have been found in scientific circles or in the tightest circles where people did not make maximum use of this kind of information.
Policy-makers, users, scientists, any citizen can now get instant access to satellite photography and data, and can apply this information to map watersheds, to plan agricultural strategies and to trace urbanization trends. This initiative brings the power of technology to the most distant corners of the world, to people who just a few years ago we would have considered totally isolated from the information age.
Beyond international partnerships that promote sustainable development, the United States is engaged in a host of other environmental and economic partnerships with governments, and nongovernmental actors as well, around the world. I will just mention two of them. One is the International Partnership for the Hydrogen Economy; a way to foster worldwide coordination of the research, development and application of hydrogen and fuel cell technologies.
The other is the Carbon Sequestration Leadership Forum. It is designed to develop technologies to capture, separate, transport and store carbon emitted by the combustion of fossil fuels before that carbon can enter the atmosphere.
We hope that these kinds of initiatives and so many other things you'll be talking about at this earth observation summit will trigger you to think of other ideas and other productive partnerships that might be entered into. And particularly, we hope that this summit will take critical first steps toward creating an integrated earth observation system. Such a system would bring together national and multinational surface, airborne and space-based measurements of the Earth into a cooperative network of systems. We could build on already established partnerships and platforms to build a powerful system of systems. An integrated earth observation system would vastly increase our store of knowledge and leverage billions of dollars of worldwide investment.
So there is much for you to do here over the next two days. And I encourage you to take full advantage of this opportunity to exchange experience, ideas and insight. It is now my honor to introduce your next speaker, a man who is committed to understanding our Earth and turning that knowledge into human well-being.
POWELL: Under the leadership of Spence Abraham, the Department of Energy has been a recognized leader in science for the service of mankind. My buddy, Spence, is a man of vision and creativity. He is an effective and passionate advocate at home and abroad for cooperation for the private and public sectors in the field of energy. And it has been a genuine pleasure for me to work side by side with him over the past two years.
Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for being here. And it is now my pleasure to introduce my colleague and my friend, the secretary of energy, Spence Abraham.
Thank you so much.
(APPLAUSE)

ABRAHAM: Thank you so much, Secretary Powell. And let me begin by welcoming all of our guests here today. I see a number of familiar faces in this room and we are very excited to have you all visit us for this Earth Observation Summit. Many of the people here are individuals with whom our department has already embarked upon a working relationship, either in the form of science and technology dialogues or other projects along the technology side or various energy technology undertakings. And so, we are very pleased to have the chance to welcome you here today.

And I want to thank Secretary Powell and the entire team here at the Department of State for their hospitality. Also, want to acknowledge and thank the work of Dr. Jack Marburger, who is the president's science and technology adviser, James Connaughton, who is the chairman of the President's Council on Environmental Quality. They, along with our other speakers this morning have helped to bring together this event so successfully today.

The development of an international, comprehensive, integrated and sustained earth observation system is in my judgment a pivotal event. It is pivotal to advancing the work which we have begun under President Bush's climate change research initiative. It is pivotal to the various tasks which Secretary Powell just outlined that will benefit all the nations of the world, and in particular help to address some of the challenges we face in dealing with questions that relate to sustainable development.

The benefits of an earth observation system to understanding various important phenomena such as land use change, crop production, energy and water use, disease outbreaks and natural hazards are vitally important -- not just to the people of the United States but to people throughout our planet.

ABRAHAM: This important summit comes just one week after Secretary Evans and his department took the lead on another large step forward with the announcement of the Climate Change Science Program that we have embarked upon here as part of our climate initiative; a 10-year strategic plan, which he may comment on, I suspect, to address many of the, as yet, unknown answers to science of climate change.

And as the secretary of energy, I'm especially pleased to note that our department's climate research programs will support the scientific aims of the global observation system that is the subject of today's summit. Our department's research observations are used to improve climate models, understand the behavior of carbon emitted to the atmosphere, and develop improved strategies for carbon sequestration.

Along with Secretary Evans, I co-chair the Committee on Climate Change, Science and Technology Integration, a project line which in our government has pooled the resources of a number of our departments and agencies to address the challenges before us. In specific terms, my department has the responsibility for overseeing the development and the application of technology that comes with every increase in our scientific understanding of climate change.

The Earth Observation Summit is yet another example of our strategy of pursuing bilateral and multilateral cooperative approaches to speed progress on a variety of issues, including climate change: an approach which we have taken and employed consistently and, I think, with good affect in advancing technology development related

to a variety of issues. In fact, just this year, in the year 2003, I think we have seen the launching of several exciting new technology initiatives that are excellent examples of this approach in which I have great expectations for. Secretary Powell outlined them briefly, and I want to comment on them as well.

Last January, in his State of the Union Address President Bush announced his plan to place the United States' focus on hydrogen technology, and in particular the development of a new automotive fuel, hydrogen, as well as its application to stationary power generation. You all know the potential benefits that that will lead to not just for America, but for the world. Not only will it on the one hand lead to vehicles which emit no greenhouse gases, but it also will tremendously enhance energy security.

ABRAHAM: And we have committed a total of $1.7 billion over the next five years for research and development work on these initiatives. But we strongly believe that greater opportunities lie in multilateral and bilateral work to advance the science and this technology. Toward that end, just last month we signed an agreement with the European Union to collaborate on hydrogen research, and as Secretary Powell indicated, later this year the United States will host an international partnership for the hydrogen economy summit.

We already have commitments from ministers from a number of interested countries to join in officially establishing such a partnership so that we might all work together to accelerate the work that will be done to more rapidly bring about the development of hydrogen fuel cell technologies and their applications, both to transportation as well as other powered generation.

But the transportation sector, while having great potential for the reduction of greenhouse gases and pollution, is not the whole story. Science and technology present us with tremendous possibilities for reducing or eliminating greenhouse gases and pollution produced while burning fossil fuels to generate electricity.

Carbon sequestration or the capture and permanent storage of produced carbon dioxide has rapidly grown in importance to become one of our highest clean coal priorities. We're currently working with private-sector partners here in America on 65 carbon sequestration projects and participating in two international projects. And we have increased our own carbon sequestration budget in my department by 60 percent.

But we recognize that the potential here for collaboration and for an even greater impact comes, as Secretary Powell just indicated, through the multilateral approach. And so, last February the State Department and the Department of Energy announced a carbon sequestration leadership initiative to help unite interested governments on the development of carbon sequestration technologies. And then, last month at a ministerial level carbon sequestration leadership forum here in Washington, more than a dozen nations plus the European Union formally joined us in this cooperative effort.

The same time we announced that leadership initiative, we also announced another highly significant development in this field. And that was a project which the Department of Energy will lead with private sector and international support. It's a project we contemplate over the next 10 to 15 years will involve an approximately $1

billion investment to design, build, and operate the world's first coal-fired, emission-free power plant. One operation of this plant, which we call "Future Gen," will be the world's cleanest full-scale fossil fuel power plant.

Using the latest technology it will generate electricity. It'll sequester greenhouse gases and provide a new source of clean-burning hydrogen as well. And, of course, as many of you know, we are actively engaged along with a number of people as we have rejoined the international thermonuclear experimental reactor project, ITER.

All of this, I think, reflects our view, which I know is widely shared in this room, that potential for international collaboration in addressing these challenges is great and the time to do it is now. In short, we're already engaged in an aggressive and active basis at a multi-prong campaign to try to address these challenges through technology development. We're trying to bring together where it's appropriate as many partners to this challenge as we can as we are doing in the scientific realm here today. And so, even as we embark on an expansion of these science initiatives, we are making rapid progress on the technology side.

A global earth observation system will add immeasurably to that progress on several levels. The information provided by the system will help in the formulation of sound, science-based environmental policies. And beyond that, it will help us to verify things like the compliance with laws and regulations to help us assess the effectiveness of our policies as well as to spot evidence of any unexpected results or unintended consequences.

On the technology side, monitoring and verification are key elements of our program on greenhouse gas mitigation technologies.

ABRAHAM: And so today's summit is very important. It's especially timely, as the United Nations prepares to review the adequacy of the Earth's climate observation system at the ninth conference of the parties to the U.N. framework on climate change this December. And for all of these reasons, we are anxious to work together with you and hope that today's participants will join together at the end of our work to adopt the declaration of the Earth Observation Summit when the deliberations conclude.

Again, let me close by just reemphasizing to all of you that we already have been working with how much we value that collaboration and how excited we are about the opportunities presented today and other challenges which lie ahead. I'm confident that not only will this undertaking be successful, but that we will, as Secretary Powell indicated, come away from today's sessions and these sessions with new ideas for additional areas in which we might all work together.

It's now my pleasure to introduce the next speaker. He is a man who I have the great honor to work with on a number of projects, because we have been designated as co-chairs of the president's climate change, science and technology undertakings. We alternate the chairmanship. And under his leadership, we have made tremendous advances on a variety of fronts. When he's not working on climate change and the issues that we are here today to discuss, he also heads the Department of Commerce of the United States, which means that he's able to integrate in a very, I think, effective fashion the concept of sustainable development and economic growth. And he brings

tremendous leadership to all of those challenges. And so, I ask you to join me in welcoming the United States secretary of commerce, Secretary Donald Evans.
(APPLAUSE)
EVANS: Thank you all very much.
Spence, thank you for your leadership on this vitally important subject to all of us in this room and people all around the world, like you.
I see a number of friends of mine in the audience. It's certainly good to have you here. I look forward to meeting more of you. I'm inspired by the attendance this morning. I'm inspired and uplifted by the interest that we feel from around the world to work on this most important issue for the future of all mankind.
Likewise, I want to thank secretary of state for hosting us today, and his leadership on this issue. He's leading the world in so many important areas right now. And I thank him for his particular focus on a global observation system and global climate change and the vision and leadership he brings to the effort.
I want to also acknowledge my friend, Sean O'Keefe, behind me, who's the director of NASA. And the tremendous amount of energy that Sean and NASA puts into this effort. It is indeed a collaborative effort within the United States government. When we arrived here some two and a half years ago, there were some 13 agencies that worked on the issue of global climate change. And under President Bush's leadership, he believed that those agencies ought to be brought together under one organization so that all agencies could work together in focusing on this most important issue.
And as Spence said, we share the co-chairmanship of the Global Climate Change, Science and Technology Initiative on behalf of the president. And we're honored to do it. And we have so much help from so many areas of the government, including Jack Marburger, who's up here with us, and Jim Connaughton, as well, who is head of CEQ for the president.
Thank all of you again for coming. Good morning to you. As I like to say, I don't think there's anything more important than measuring the heartbeat of Mother Earth as we continue to move into the 21st century. I believe we have an historic opportunity to do just that, to do an effective job of measuring the heartbeat of Mother Earth in the years ahead. We can make significant progress toward creating a true global observation system that can benefit all mankind.
Many pieces of this global observation system are, quite frankly, already in place. New technologies are providing unprecedented views of changes occurring on Earth. The data obtained is invaluable to all of us. We use it to estimate crop yields, monitor weather, monitor water and air quality, improve airline safety and to enhance weather predictions all around the world.
However, as you know, critical gaps do exist in the earth observation network. Because of this, we don't have the comprehensive and sustained real-time data on the state of the world's atmosphere and oceans.
As a result, we don't have much of the information or sound science needed to make policy decisions affecting economic growth, the environment and public health and safety.

On a personal note, the value of the Earth Observing System was evident to me recently when Hurricane Claudette struck my home state of Texas. Two people lost their lives.

One hundred years ago -- 100 years ago -- before we were able to track storms and issue warnings, a hurricane hit the state of Texas, killing over 8,000 people. The world population is projected to nearly double, to 12 billion people, as we move on into the 21st century. This growth will bring increasing demands for food and clean water and clean air and energy and safe and healthy habitats.

This demand will mean enormous strains on our natural resources. And I would say to all of you that it's time for us to close the data gaps that exist out there. It's time to move the Earth Observation System to the next level, move it to the next level so we can benefit not only this generation, but the generations of your children and your grandchildren.

And it's why the federal government of the United States spends $4.5 billion -- $4.5 billion -- each year on global climate change science and technology. And it is why President Bush has reallocated $103 million to the high priority of a global observation system.

More accurate weather watches and warnings can not only help save lives, but also billions of dollars in property damage. In the United States, more accurate hurricane forecasts alone have prevented nearly $2 billion in yearly damage cost.

Because of more accurate El Nino forecasts we are now reducing damage losses to our economy by 13 to 16 percent. The reason we have more accurate El Nino forecasts is because we have monitors in the oceans where El Nino begins and occurs.

In its latest report, the National Research Council estimates that as much as 40 percent of the U.S. economy is weather- and climate-sensitive.

EVANS: At risk are industries, such as agriculture, transportation, tourism, construction and insurance. In pure economic terms, reports say that national institutions that provide weather, climate and water services to their citizens contribute some $20 billion to $40 billion each year to the national economies.

Clearly, there are humanitarian and economic benefits to having information from thousands of individual technological assets to draw a more complete picture of weather and climate change and the heartbeat of Mother Earth. However, there's yet a third reason for taking this next step, and it's advancing earth science. There are still many unanswered questions about the ecosystem-based processes that define our world. Sir Isaac Newton wrote of "the great nation of truth that is still to be discovered." A comprehensive Earth Observation System can bring some of these truths to light.

There's the power in this room to make a difference. There is the power in this room to begin a journey that will connect our world in ways that will help protect our citizens, our fellow mankind and our environment while growing our economies for generations to come, while growing our economies and lifting the good people of this world up out of poverty, helping lead this world to a place our children and all of our grandchildren would all want to call home.

We look forward to working with you. And again, thank all of you for coming. Thank you for your interest. And thank you for your commitment to this most important task. God bless you.
(APPLAUSE)

Earth Observation Summit to Discuss Ways to Link Sensors Gathering Data on Earth's Condition

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English
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The Bush administration is hosting an international summit to better coordinate Earth observations. The meeting brings together delegates from more than 30 countries and 20 international organizations to decide how to link the world's air, land, and sea sensors gathering data about the planet's condition. But, environmentalists argue that the summit is part of a U.S. government plan to stall action on global warming.
The Bush administration says the purpose of the Earth Observation Summit is to generate top-level international support for establishing a comprehensive global environmental monitoring system. Right now, the system is a loose set of ocean buoys, space satellites, balloons, and other instruments on land, sea, and in the air.
The head of the U.S. oceans and atmosphere agency, NOAA, Conrad Lautenbacher, says an integrated system would improve our understanding of issues like climate change and generate forecasts policy makers will need to deal with them. "We need to band together to build this system to provide the baseline for prudent environmental decisions for the world leaders - to start figuring out how to coordinate the assets that we have today, how to determine the fair sharing of data that is necessary for all nations, and how to fill in the gaps" he says.
The summit is linked to President Bush's recently-announced 10-year plan to study climate change. The plan would coordinate government research to reduce what it calls uncertainties in forecasts about climate warming as the result of polluting greenhouse gases. The plan would provide more than $100 million to accelerate the development of new global observation technologies.
Environmental groups criticize the program as an effort to delay action on global warming by restudying questions they say are already answered. At a Washington organization called the National Environmental Trust, legislative lobbyist Debbie Reed says the Earth Observation Summit will support this delay. "The idea for a global observation summit is a terrific initiative to pull together all the resources of the world in terms of our observation capabilities," she says. "Unfortunately they are calling for a 10-year plan for the countries to all agree to. They have consistently said we don't have the

type of data we need now. Yet virtually every other country has agreed we do have the data that human actions are causing greenhouse gases to accumulate in the atmosphere and it is causing global warming."
Soon after taking office in 2001, President Bush reversed the U.S. commitment to the Kyoto Protocol, which outlines an international plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions widely thought to cause global warming. Mr. Bush said the plan was unfair because it exempted developing countries and would be costly to the U.S. economy.
Ms. Reed accuses the president of ignoring climate realities. "The World Meteorological Organization on July 2 issued an unprecedented alert saying that severe weather events are happening across the world in unprecedented numbers and will continue to happen into the future," she says.
But administration official Conrad Lautenbacher calls charges that President Bush is stalling on climate change unfair. "Nobody is arguing in this country that we don't need to stabilize greenhouse gases. I think the argument is, how fast do you do it and what means do you use to accomplish that end? You have to know quite a bit about what's going on in the science side before you can make an intelligent choice as to what to do on the policy side, because many of these choices involve billions and trillions of dollars of economic dislocation and social dislocation," he says.
As for earth observation, Mr. Lautenbacher says its value goes beyond climate change to include useful information on a wide array of activities including agriculture, land use, forests, and soil moisture. The Washington summit will appoint a working group to begin coordinating environmental monitoring and report to the second Earth Observation Conference in Japan next year.
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Politics & Policy: Summit to Seek A Complete View Of Global Weather

By John J. Fialka
381 words
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The Asian Wall Street Journal
M8
English
(Copyright (c) 2003, Dow Jones & Company, Inc.)
WASHINGTON -- Ministers from 27 countries plan to meet here next week to devise a plan for closing the many "blind spots" in civilian systems that measure the planet's climate change and monitor weather patterns.
The Bush administration, sponsor of the "Earth Observation Summit," believes that the information from improved coordination between satellites, ocean buoys and land-based monitoring systems will aid both scientific and humanitarian efforts. It also sees billions of dollars in commercial spinoffs.

"The ocean is vastly underobserved and underexplored," says Conrad C. Lautenbacher, U.S. undersecretary of commerce. The U.S. Commerce and Energy departments are hosting the event. Mr. Lautenbacher says that while the U.S. has space satellites that monitor weather patterns, forecasters need more data on oceans -- sea-surface temperatures and movements of undersea currents -- to get a complete picture of weather and climate change.

Mr. Lautenbacher, a retired U.S. Navy vice admiral, says there are blind spots in developing countries that can't afford measurement platforms. Other gaps stem from countries that prefer to sell data, rather than share it. He says the goal of the meeting is to develop "the political willpower" among industrial nations, and developing nations who want to use such data, to establish uniform rules for sharing it and to generate financial aid to fill the gaps.

He notes that 40% of the $10 trillion U.S. economy is affected by weather and climate changes and predicts that farmers, scientists and many others would benefit from improved global weather data. Insurance companies, for example, use it to price and sell "weather derivatives," or policies that protect companies against damage from adverse weather changes.

While they applaud the Bush administration's push for more research, environmental groups charge that it may be intended to divert attention from the fact that the U.S. is one of the few industrial nations that hasn't agreed to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other man-made pollutants that are thought to be warming the atmosphere. "We can't afford to wait for 10 or 15 years for more data before we decide to act," says Alden Meyer, a spokesman for the Union of Concerned Scientists.

Earth watchers keep an eye on the big picture.

By Jenny Hogan.
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New Scientist
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A SUMMIT in Washington DC this weekend could change the way scientific information about our planet is collected. Hosting ministers from 25 countries, including all the G8 nations, as well as top scientists from space agencies and meteorological offices, the meeting aims to develop a strategy to catalogue Earth observations and spot any gaps in them.

At present, geographical and climate data that streams in from thousands of satellites and monitoring stations is poorly coordinated by the countries and organisations that collect it. No one organisation knows how many observing systems there are, or what data they are gathering.

This means we are missing a valuable opportunity to understand how different systems work at a global level, says Conrad Lautenbacher, head of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in Washington DC and organiser of the summit. "We have an urgent need to understand what is going on with our Earth's system," he says, especially as the population increases.

Historically, meteorologists have led the way towards globally coordinated observations. Weather systems migrate across oceans and continents, and financial returns from forecasting have encouraged investment in international cooperation. Advance warning of the weather changes that accompany El Nino, for instance, allows farmers in the US to plan for extra rainfall and Australians to prepare for drought. Yet other areas of science lag far behind in this respect.

Five years ago, 14 organisations in different fields of Earth observation formed a partnership called Integrated Global Observing Strategy (IGOS) to address the problem. But progress has been hampered by a lack of political and financial support. Jeff Tschirley, a programme director at IGOS, complains that terrestrial observations - images of the Earth itself rather than data on the atmosphere - are in a mess. There is no global inventory of observations, for example.

There is also little agreement between countries on standards. And to make matters worse, research measurements are funded independently of routine observations, meaning that many data sources dry up as soon as research projects finish.

Yet the economic returns from terrestrial observations could be as great as those from weather forecasts. For instance, one of the projects that Tschirley oversees will measure the global flux of carbon - crucial for checking countries' compliance with the Kyoto protocol. Policy decisions based on observations like these have trillion-dollar consequences, says Lautenbacher.

The working group proposed at the conference will have a year to come up with a plan for improving the collection of observations. But political awareness should also help solve some of the problems, and IGOS members hope that the summit marks a change in attitude. David Williams, a representative from EUMETSAT, the organisation that controls Europe's weather satellites, says: "The meeting is being opened by Colin Powell, and if you can get him to turn up and talk about the environment you are doing well."

What's Ahead in Aerospace: Summit in Washington to discuss international Earth observation system

Staff
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2
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SUMMIT: Senior Bush administration officials will meet with representatives from more than 30 nations in Washington July 31 to establish plans for an integrated international Earth observation system of satellite-based, ground-based, and ocean-based sensors. The system is intended to provide climate data that will help address global economic, social, and scientific challenges, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). On hand will be ministerial-level representatives from the G-8 and other countries, as well as officials from the World Bank and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). Administration officials at the meeting will include Secretary of State Colin Powell, NASA Administrator Sean O'Keefe, Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham, and Commerce Secretary Don Evans.

Flying blind.

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26 July 2003
The Economist
English
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Earth observation
Why global voyeurs will come together in Washington next week
"WHAT matters gets measured" is a maxim familiar to most scientists. It suggests, in turn, that the global environment does not matter. Governments, though concerned about their own patches of the planet, care little about other people's. Although satellites peer down on Earth to monitor parts of its atmosphere, oceans, forests and deserts, and although fixed weather stations and nomadic buoys and balloons provide accurate readings from individual spots, nobody is responsible for joining up the dots to reveal the bigger picture.
Where people do not live, the situation is even worse. The ocean's interaction with the atmosphere is critical to understanding how the climate works - but the vast oceans of the southern hemisphere where much of it takes place are woefully understudied. Even so basic a question as whether the sea level is rising cannot be answered properly. There is good reason to think that it is (in part, at least, due to global warming) but there are not enough monitoring stations to be sure.
Perhaps to the surprise of its critics, one government - America's - wants to change this. On July 31st the United States will host a conference in Washington, DC, devoted to the theme of global observation. Its purpose is to try to convert other countries around the world to the idea of collecting, analysing and sharing environmental data in a coherent fashion. Conrad Lautenbacher, a retired admiral who is head of America's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the moving spirit behind the

conference, declares that this is the "first-ever political summit on earth observation". He says that more than two dozen countries plan to send high-level emissaries.

Seeing green

If this actually happens, it will be a significant step forward. The reason is that the biggest obstacle to proper monitoring of the Earth is neither technology - all sorts of fancy satellite and ground-based observation techniques are now available - nor money. It is politics. The oceans aside, the biggest gaps in the global-observation process involve poor countries. And this has frequently been a sin of commission, not omission. For many years, developing countries were suspicious of efforts by the rich world to observe, say, deforestation patterns in tropical forests. Apart from the embarrassment involved, they suspected that the rich would somehow use such data to exploit the natural resources of the poor. Some countries, such as Brazil, China and India, have sent up their own satellites, to control the data flow themselves. Others preferred to ignore the problem.

Looking outside your borders helps, though. Proponents of co-operation point to the system of buoys and monitoring stations set up in the Pacific in recent years to keep track of El Nino, an intermittent ocean current. In 1982 and 1983, the economies of many countries on the eastern shores of the Pacific were hit hard by the disruptive weather connected with this phenomenon. But when it struck again in 1997 and 1998, early warnings from the new monitoring system helped farmers and emergency crews to prepare.

California, NOAA reckons, endured $1.1 billion less damage in 1997-98 than it would otherwise have done, thanks to the warning it got of El Nino. The rest of America saves $200m-300m a year courtesy of similar, smaller-scale warnings. Next week's conference is meant to build on this sort of experience by linking different countries' national and regional monitoring systems together, and also by integrating different sorts of data (for example, on weather and plant cover).

That will not be as easy as it sounds. Even if the political will is there, there are technical issues to be overcome as the different data-collection efforts are not always compatible. Here, the experience of the private sector may help. Integrating disparate geographical databases, albeit on a smaller scale than Admiral Lautenbacher is envisaging, has been something of a boom industry recently.

Earlier this month, for example, some 11,000 people attended a conference in San Diego run by ESRI, the biggest "geographic information systems" (GIS) software firm in the world. GIS, the systematic handling and integration of geographical databases and digitised maps, is being stimulated by the development of common standards of the sort that Admiral Lautenbacher will need.

To promote this idea, several dozen companies, government agencies and universities have banded together into the Open GIS Consortium (OGC), a group devoted to an "open source, plug-and-play" approach to GIS. Mark Reichardt, one of the OGC's directors, likens the consortium's aim to that of the Linux operating system, and suggests that the day is not far off when existing, disjointed databases (of health statistics or poverty in a region, for example) could be overlaid routinely on to, say,

maps of the sites of waste tips or chemical plants. Military men and aid workers in Iraq are already using such technology. Larger-scale versions should help with Admiral Lautenbacher's plans.

Whether any new science - or indeed anything new at all - will be unveiled at the conference remains to be seen. By the time it happens, though, the Bush administration is expected to have announced its revised plan on climate-change research (it had not done so when this article went to press). An earlier draft of the plan was criticised by America's National Academy of Sciences for casting needless doubt on things that most scientists already agree are true about global warming. A conference about how little is actually known about the Earth might make an interesting counterpoint to such criticisms.

But maybe that is too cynical. For the fact remains that this apparently most un-green of administrations (at least in the eyes of environmentalists) is about to bring together heavyweight policymakers from many countries to forge a coherent international strategy for Earth observation for the very first time. The planet may at last get the chance to be measured in full. And that, surely, is good news for greens and greenery everywhere.

Summit on Earth observation to be held in U.S. on July 31+.

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Organisation of Asia-Pacific News Agencies
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TOKYO, July 23 Kyodo -

A summit to create an integrated system to observe and monitor the Earth's conditions will be held July 31 in the United States, with hopes such a system will help predict natural disasters and identify the state of environmental degradation, Japanese government officials said Wednesday.

The officials said the upcoming summit marks the first framework in which countries will directly take part.

At present, an international earth monitoring system known as the Integrated Global Observing Strategy is operational, in which Japanese, U.S. and European space and meteorological organs voluntarily work for an international framework to identify and monitor the Earth's conditions and processes.

At the summit to take place in Washington later this month, science minister Atsuko Toyama will represent Japan, the officials said. Japan is expected to be one of 34 countries attending.

According to a draft declaration for the summit, the summit is envisioned to work for a "comprehensive, coordinated Earth observation system" and toward that end, it has called for the need to prepare a 10-year plan.
Summit organizers say they are aiming to launch a working-level group during the summit to draw up the plan, with the plan expected to be decided on during a ministerial conference next spring in Tokyo.
Items for observation under the envisioned integrated system include rainfall, concentration of carbon dioxide, temperature and ocean currents.
It is hoped that data sharing among the countries, based on their ground facilities, airplanes and satellite networks, will help in predicting unusual weather phenomena such as drought and torrential rains, or long-term climate changes such as global warming, the organizers said.
Earlier, at the June summit of the Group of Eight (G-8) countries in Evian, France, the G-8 called for strengthening international cooperation on global observation. ==Kyodo 2003-07-23 22:25:01.

Washington summit to target global observing system

Staff
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English
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The U.S. is sponsoring a summit meeting on Earth observation to jump-start work on an integrated and sustained global observing system capable of providing reliable real-time data for climate and disaster monitoring, water/resource management and other environmental concerns.
The ministerial-level conference, to be held at the U.S. State Dept. in Washington on July 31, has a goal of convincing developed and developing nations to agree on the concept of such a system, a 10-year roadmap for implementing it and a policy for openly exchanging system data. A preliminary set of objectives and an implemention plan for the system, which has been in discussion for some time, are to be drafted by a working group that will meet the day after the summit.
The meeting is intended to become an annual event, with follow-up summits planned in Japan in 2004 and in Europe the year after. The gathering in Washington comes on the heels of a statement last month by the G-8 nations noting the potential social, economic and scientific benefits of a global observing system. It also follows a recent agreement

to expand weather data-sharing between the U.S. and Europe, and a decision on European funding for a new-generation operational oceanographic satellite system (AW&ST July 7, p. 36).
As of last week, 28 nations and 19 international organizations had agreed or expressed their intent to attend the summit, which will be hosted by U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell. The list includes major potential asset contributors such as the G-8 nations, the European Union, India and China.
In the aftermath of the U.S. decision not to sign the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change, the Bush administration has been laboring to regain the edge in climate and other key environmental issues and to show it is committed to international cooperation (AW&ST July 8, 2002, p. 62). To underscore its commitment, the administration's 2004 budget proposal calls for $17 million in new global observing initiatives by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, on top of an extra $18 million committed the year before.

Earth Summit to call for global data sharing.

373 words
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Daily Yomiuri
1
English
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Delegates at an upcoming Earth observation summit will call for the establishment of a global meteorological and environmental observation system to allow governments of participating countries to share their data, The Yomiuri Shimbun learned Sunday.
The system is designed for the international community to enhance its capability of predicting environmental changes in the atmosphere, oceans and other entities.
According to a draft of the declaration, to be adopted at the summit, the delegates will also call for the establishment of a working panel, which is to draw up a 10-year action program by next spring, when the second summit meeting is scheduled to be held in Tokyo.
The first summit will be in Washington on July 31, and will be attended by 33 countries, including Japan, the United States, Britain, Russia and China.
Education, Science and Technology Minister Atsuko Toyama and U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell are scheduled to attend the summit.
In the draft declaration, the summiteers will express that by taking part in an Earth observation system, which will serve the interests of all mankind, they will contribute to the protection of the global environment for future generations. The summiteers will then reconfirm the need for global observation data.

EARTH OBSERVATION SUMMIT

Specifically, the draft declaration calls for observation data to be collected with ground, aerial and satellite networks and be exchanged among countries in a complete and open manner.
It also calls for the establishment of a working panel to draw up a 10-year action plan for the Earth observation system.
Earth observation activities concerning the Earth's meteorological and environmental aspects are currently chiefly undertaken through cooperation among such organizations as the World Meteorological Organization and Food and Agriculture Organization.
With the upcoming Earth observation summit, the participating countries hope to be able to conduct more accurate environmental monitoring and devise more effective environmental protection programs.
The Earth observation system is also expected to help the world community recognize the signs of such natural disasters as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and torrential rain, and minimize possible damage. It is also expected to help accurately simulate global warming and El Nino phenomenons and to help countries concerned to work out effective countermeasures.

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